AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Application No.: 10/582,354

Art Unit: 3734

Please amend Figs. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 as set forth in the attached Replacement Sheets of drawings. No new matter has been added.

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REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as presently amended, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-20 are pending in the present application. Claims 1-20 stand rejected.

Objection to the Drawings

The drawings were objected to under 37 CFR §1.84(h)(2) because the various figures

shown in the drawings are not separately labeled. The Examiner requires that figures 1A-C, 2A-

C, 3A-C, and 5A-B should be separately labeled.

In response to the objection to the drawings, each of Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 5 has been amended

to separately label the separate views.

Further, although the Examiner did not object to Fig. 7, Fig. 7 is described in the

specification as "Fig. 7A" and "Fig. 7B" (see, e.g., page 7 of the specification). Accordingly,

Fig. 7 has also been amended to separately label the separate views.

Furthermore, the Examiner objected to Figs. 6 and 7 because these figures are not

designated with a legend, such as "Prior Art". Figs. 6 and 7 have been amended to label these

figures as "Related Art". This is consistent with the description of Figs. 6 and 7 found, e.g., on

page 40 of the specification as originally filed.

No new matter has been added. Approval and entry of the changes to the drawings are

earnestly solicited.

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Amendment to the Brief Description of the Drawings section

In connection with the changes to the drawings discussed above, the Brief Description of

the Drawings section of the application has been amended such that it is consistent with the

amended drawings. That is, the Brief Description of the Drawings section has been amended

such that the separate views in the figures are described separately.

Further, in accordance with preferred U.S. patent application format, the Brief

Description of the Drawings section has been moved from the end of the specification to page 21

of the specification (as originally filed).

Objection to the Abstract

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The Abstract of the Disclosure was objected to because it exceeds 150 words. The

Abstract of the Disclosure has been deleted and replaced with a new Abstract that is 150 words

or less

Approval and entry of the new Abstract are respectfully requested.

Objection to the Specification

The specification was objected to because the specification does not include appropriate

headings for various sections (see Item 7 of the Office Action). The specification has been

amended to include the types of section headings recommended in the guidelines provided in the

Manual of Patent Examining Procedure §608.01(a). Accordingly, it is believed that the

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specification now includes headings for the various sections that are in conformance with

preferred U.S. practice.

Approval and entry of the amendments to the specification are earnestly solicited.

Objections to the Claims

Claims 1, 3-5, 7-10, 12-17, 19 and 20 were objected to for informalities. More

specifically, in Item 8, pages 4-6 of the Office Action, the Examiner notes various informalities

in the claims. It is noted that the objections to the claims involve asserted lack of antecedent

hasis for certain claim terms

The claims have been amended to obviate the informalities noted by the Examiner.

Accordingly, approval and entry of the amendments to the claims are earnestly solicited.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph

Claims 3, 4, 7-16 and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, for

alleged indefiniteness.

It is noted that many of rejections under §112(2) asserted by the Examiner involve

alleged lack of antecedent basis for certain claim terms. It is believed that the present

amendments to the claims obviate the §112, second paragraph, rejection. Accordingly,

reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under §112, second paragraph, are respectfully

requested.

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Claims 9, 12 and 13

Claims 9, 12 and 13 were rejected under §112, second paragraph, based on the assertion

that the limitation "the magnitude of a moment required for starting the bending action of the

second articulation portion is larger than a moment required for the bending action of the first

articulation portion" is indefinite because it is a functional limitation that is not supported by

recitation of sufficient structure in the claim to perform the function.

For the reasons set forth below, this basis of the §112, second paragraph, rejection is

respectfully traversed.

First, because claims 9, 12 and 13 recite "movable means" these claims should be

construed as means-plus-function claims under §112, sixth paragraph. There is no requirement

that a mean-plus-function claim element recite specific structure. In fact, a means-plus-function

claim element should not recite specific structure or else it is not construed as a means-plus-

function claim. More specifically, as set forth in 35 U.S.C. §112, sixth paragraph "An element in

a claim for a combination may be expressed as a means or step for performing a specified

function without the recital of structure, material, or acts in support thereof, and such claim

shall be construed to cover the corresponding structure, material, or acts described in the

specification and equivalents thereof."

Thus, the structure for performing the claimed function corresponds to the structure

described in the specification and equivalents thereof. It is submitted that the specification

clearly describes the structure that realizes the function "the magnitude of a moment required for

starting the bending action of the second articulation portion is larger than a moment required

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for the bending action of the first articulation portion" in the description of the joint structure of

the second articulation portion beginning on page 32, line 15 of the specification. More

particularly, on page 34, line 8 through page 36, line 6, the specification describes how the

structure of the second articulation portion 51 increases the moment required for the bending

action of the second articulation portion 51 compared to the moment required for bending first

articulation portion 50.

Claim 10

Claim 10 was rejected based on the assertion that the limitation "and a force generated in

the direction along the rotary shaft is increased between the first coupling portion and the

second coupling portion accompanied by the bending action of the second articulation portion"

is indefinite because it is a functional limitation that is not supported by recitation of sufficient

structure in the claim to perform the function.

First, it is submitted that the basis for this \$112(2) rejection is unclear. In particular, if a

claim is believed to not recite sufficient structure to perform a function, then the claim should be

treated under 112, sixth paragraph.

Second, it is submitted that the structure that performs the function "and a force

generated in the direction along the rotary shaft is increased between the first coupling portion

and the second coupling portion accompanied by the bending action of the second articulation

portion" is the "first coupling portion" and the "second coupling portion".

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For example, the structure which supports the function of claim 10 may be (but is not

limited to) a forward tapered shape of the first and second coupling portions. (It is noted that the

"forward tapered shape" is recited in claim 11 (see also, for example, paragraphs [0101], [0102]

and [0103]); however, applicant is permitted to claim broadly, such as in claim 10.) If the

thicker portions in the forward tapered shape come to overlap each other accompanied by the

bending action, its force, contact pressure or friction torque increase as compared with a force

acting between the two members at the joint portion 51a when the articulation portion is not bent

(bending angle: 0 deg.).

However, the structure to support the above-noted function of claim 10 is not limited to

"a forward tapered shape." For example, it is also possible interference fit and to realize by the

interference fit or the spring washer (see, e.g., paragraphs [0109] and [0110]). The term of "the

interference fit" means that the gap between the joint portions 51a is a minus.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under §112,

second paragraph, are respectfully requested.

Claims Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-9 and 12-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by

Yamashita et al. (Multi-Slider Linkage Mechanism for Endoscopic Forceps", Oct. 2003).

Claim 19 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. \$102(b) as being anticipated by or, in the alternative,

under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Yamashita et al. (Multi-Slider Linkage Mechanism for

Endoscopic Forceps", Oct. 2003) in view of Barry (USP 5,928,136).

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The independent claims will be addressed separately below.

Claim 1

Independent claim 1 has been amended to clarify aspects of the present invention. In

particular, claim 1 has been amended to clarify the airtight portion that holds the link

mechanism. Support for the amendments to claim 1 is provided, e.g., in Fig. 4 and the

corresponding description thereof.

Independent claim 1 is directed to an embodiment, such as shown in Fig. 4, having a link

guide portion 26 that is sealed to prevent gas leakage (see, e.g., page 29, lines 8-15 of the

specification as originally filed).

The Examiner relies on Figs. 1 and 5 and page 2579, first paragraph on the right hand

side of Yamashita to teach the features of claim 1.

Page 2579, first paragraph on the right hand side of Yamashita discloses the following:

"Two linkages and one stainless steel wire were connected to three linear-drive units. The unit consisted of lead screw, brushless DC-

servomotor and slide type potentiometer which detected the displacement of the lead screw (M3 \times 0.5), to do feedback control.

Three units were arranged in the shape of an equilateral triangle (Fig. 9), settled in an acrylics cylinder with inner diameter of 36 mm to prevent a gas leak under pneumoperitoneum." ["Pneumoperitoneum" is air or gas

in the abdominal (peritoneal) cavity.]

As best understood, it appears that the Examiner considers that the acrylic cylinder of

Yamashita corresponds to the claimed "air tight member". According to Yamashita, linear

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drive units, which respectively consist of a lead screw, brushless DC-servomotor and

potentiometer, are settled in the acrylic cylinder. See Fig. 5 of Yamashita.

However, it is respectfully submitted that the Yamashita reference does not disclose "an

air-tight link guide portion provided in the hollow portion of the cylindrical frame that holds and

guides the link mechanism as the link mechanism moves to transmit the drive power to the

movable means" as presently recited in claim 1.

As discussed above, the Examiner apparently considers the acrylic cylinder of

Yamashita, in which linear-drive units respectively consisting of a lead screw, a brushless DC-

servomotor and a slide type potentiometer are settled, to correspond to the claimed "air tight

member'. However, the acrylic cylinder of Yamashita is not "an air-tight link guide portion

provided in the hollow portion of the cylindrical frame that holds and guides the link mechanism

as the link mechanism moves to transmit the drive power to the movable means" as presently

recited in claim 1.

Claim 5

Independent claim 5 presently recites "an air-tight link guide portion provided in the

hollow portion of the cylindrical frame that holds and guides the link mechanism as the link

mechanism moves to transmit the drive power to the movable means" in a manner similar to

claim 1. It is submitted that this feature recited in claim 5 patentably distinguishes over the

Yamashita reference for the same reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1.

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Claims 9, 12 and 13

Independent claims 9, 12 and 13 are directed to an embodiment of the invention

comprising a "movable means" having first and second articulation portions constructed such

that "a magnitude of a moment required for starting the bending action of the second

articulation portion is larger than a moment required for the bending action of the first

articulation portion."

The Examiner applies the Yamashita reference against claims 9, 12 and 13 and asserts

"the moment to start bending at the second portion is greater than that of the first portion, since

the forces required for bending at the second articulation portion moves both the first and second

articulation portions which would require more force than moving just one of the articulation

portions." See sentence bridging pages 9 and 10 of the Office Action.

It is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's assertion regarding the "moment" is not

correct. More specifically, Yamashita discloses that the bending action at the second

articulation portion starts after the bending action at the first articulation portion ends. However,

Yamashita fails to disclose that the magnitude of a moment required for starting the bending

action of the second articulation portion is larger than a moment required for the bending action

of the first articulation portion.

Therefore, Vamashita does not disclose or suggest the claimed a "movable means"

having first and second articulation portions constructed such that "a magnitude of a moment

required for starting the bending action of the second articulation portion is larger than a

moment required for the bending action of the first articulation portion" as recited in

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independent claims 9, 12 and 13.

Claim 15

Independent claim 15 has been amended to clarify the structure and function of the

claimed "first joint portion". More particularly, claim 15 now recites "wherein the first joint

portion includes a projection that can be releasably connected to a drive power generating

means". Support for this amendment is provided, e.g., on page 27, lines 21-25 of applicant's

specification, which describes release of a connecting pin 21. Independent claim 15 is directed

to an embodiment of the invention, such as shown in Fig. 2B or in Figs. 3A-3C, wherein a link

member 23 (e.g., "drive power transmitting means") includes a locate base 22 with the

connecting pin 21 (e.g., "first joint portion").

As best understood, the Examiner relies on the disclosure of "Two linkages and one

stainless steel wire were connected to three linear-drive units" on page 2579, first paragraph,

right hand column, of Yamashita to teach the claimed "first joint portion". See Office Action,

page 10, lines 7-9.

Thus, the Yamashita reference generally discloses linkages that are connected to drive

units. However, the Yamashita reference does not disclose a joint portion connected to the end

of a linkage member, the joint portion including a projection that can be releasably connected to

a drive power generating means. More specifically, Yamashita does not disclose "a first joint

portion connected to at an end of the at least one link member, wherein the first joint portion

includes a projection that can be releasably connected to a drive power generating means for

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generating the drive power" as presently recited in claim 15.

Claim 19

Independent claim 19 was rejected under §102 in view of Yamashita. Alternatively,

claim 19 was rejected under §103 over Yamashita in view of Barry (see page 10, Item 28 of

Office Action). The rejection of claim 19 under §103 will be discussed later.

As will be discussed below, it is respectfully submitted that Yamashita does not disclose

or suggest the "a first joint portion provided on the drive power transmitting means and a second

joint portion provided on the drive power generating means are provided to be connectable and

separable" and "a coupling between the first joint portion and the second joint portion is

executed after the bending action member and the actuator are jointed together" as recited in

claim 19.

The Examiner asserts that Figs. 5 and 9 and page 2580, left column, first paragraph, of

Yamashita discloses the features recited in claim 19. Fig. 5 of Yamashita shows an endoscopic

forceps manipulator wherein an end effector is separable from an unsterilizable part. Page 2580,

left column, first paragraph, of Yamashita discloses that the handheld manipulator has a

removable grip. However, Yamashita does not disclose the specifics of how the removable grip

is achieved

It is respectfully submitted that Yamashita does not disclose or suggest the "a first joint

portion provided on the drive power transmitting means and a second joint portion provided on

the drive power generating means are provided to be connectable and separable" and "a coupling

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between the first joint portion and the second joint portion is executed after the bending action

member and the actuator are jointed together" as recited in claim 19.

Yamashita is silent regarding the specifics of the features that allow the grip to be

removable, and does not disclose a first joint portion provided on a drive power transmitting

means and a second joint portion provided on a drive power generating means that are

connectable and separable. Further, Yamashita does not disclose or suggest that the coupling

between the first and second joint portions occurs after the bending action member and the

actuator are joined together.

It is well established that anticipation under \$102 is established only if all the elements of

an invention, as stated in the claim, are identically set forth in a single prior art reference.

Moreover, it is not sufficient that each element be found somewhere in the reference, the

elements must be arranged as in the claim. Lindemann Maschinenfabrik GMBH v. American

Hoist and Derrick Co., 703 F.2d 1452, 1458 (Fed. Cir. 1984).

In view of the foregoing discussion, it is respectfully submitted that Yamashita et al.

does not disclose each and every element recited in independent claims 1, 5, 9, 12, 13, 15 and 19.

Therefore, it is submitted that independent claims 1, 5, 9, 12, 13, 15 and 19 patentably

distinguish over the Yamashita et al. reference. Dependent claims 2-4, 6-8, 14 and 16 also

patentably distinguish over the Yamashita et al. reference by virtue of their dependency on

certain independent claims. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of

claims 1-9, 12-16 and 19 under §102 are respectfully requested.

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Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 10 and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over

Yamashita et al. (Multi-Slider Linkage Mechanism for Endoscopic Forceps", Oct. 2003) in

view of Kuehn et al. (USP 6,743,239).

Claims 17-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. \$103(a) as being unpatentable over

Yamashita et al. (Multi-Slider Linkage Mechanism for Endoscopic Forceps", Oct. 2003) in

view of Barry et al. (USP 5,928,136).

Initially, it is noted that claims 10 and 11 depend from independent claim 9 (discussed

above). It is submitted that Kuehn et al. was not relied upon to alleviate and does not alleviate

any of the deficiencies of Yamashita et al. discussed above with respect to claim 9. Therefore,

claims 11 and 12 patentably distinguish over the combination of Yamashita et al. and Kuehn et

al. for the same reasons set forth above with respect to claim 9 by virtue of their dependency

thereon

Further, claim 17 depends from independent claim 15 (discussed above). It is submitted

that the Barry et al. reference was not relied upon to alleviate and does not alleviate any of the

deficiencies discussed above with respect to independent claim 15. Therefore, claim 17

patentably distinguishes over the combination of Yamashita et al. and Barry et al. for the same

reasons set forth above with respect to claim 15 by virtue of its dependency thereon.

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Claim 18

Independent claim 18 has been amended to clarify features of the invention. In

particular, claim 18 has been amended to clarify the elastic structure of the "second joint

portion" and to clarify the arrangement of the "first joint portion" and the "second joint portion"

that permits the connection between the first and second joint portions.

Independent claim 18 is directed to an embodiment of the invention, such as shown in

Fig. 2A or in Figs. 3A-3C, having a joint arm 13 ("second joint portion") having an opening 13c

("fitting hole") in which a projecting portion of a first joint is fitted. The joint arm 13 is movable

along the longitudinal direction of the actuator by the motor 12 (see, e.g., page 23, lies 3-6 and

page 26, lines 19-21 of the specification).

As discussed in the paragraph bridging pages 12 and 13 of the Office Action, the

Examiner recognizes that Yamashita does not explicitly disclose that "the drive power

transmitting means including a first joint portion including a projection portion". The Examiner

also recognizes that Yamashita does not disclose "the drive power generating means including a

second joint portion including an elastic body substantially perpendicular to the transmitting

direction of the drive power and having a fitting hole." See sentence bridging pages 12 and 13

of the Office Action.

The Barry reference

The Examiner relies on Barry to teach the first and second joint portions as claimed.

Barry discloses a flexible endoscope having articulated vertebra 10. The articulated vertebra 10

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consist of identical joined-together segments 11. The segments 11 are joined together by coaxial

hinge pins 16.

The Examiner relies on Fig. 3 and col. 3, lines 7-55 of Barry to teach the claimed "first

joint" and "second joint". Fig. 3 is a cross-section of a connection portion between the segments

11. As shown in Fig. 3, the end 21 of an upper segment 11 includes a hinge aperture 24. An end

20 of a lower segment 11 includes a hinge pin 25 that is attached to a surface of the lower

segment 11 with adhesive (see col. 3, lines 28-35). Joinder of segments 11 is completed when

the hinge pin 25 fits into the hinge aperture 24.

The Examiner considers the portion 20 of the lower segment 11 having the hinge pin 25

to correspond to the claimed "first joint portion (20) including a projecting portion (25)". The

Examiner considers the portion 21 of the upper segment 11 having the hinge aperture 24 to

correspond to the claimed "second joint portion including an elastic body (21) including a fitting

hole (24)".

First, it is submitted that neither Yamashita nor Barry disclose or suggest "a second

joint portion connected to the drive power generating means, the second joint portion including

an elastic body having a fitting hole, and the elastic body can be elastically urged in a direction

substantially perpendicular to a transmitting direction of the drive power" as presently recited in

claim 18.

The Examiner relies on the portion 21 of segment 11 having a hinge aperture 24 of Barry

to teach the claimed "second joint portion including an elastic body". However, Barry does not

disclose or suggest that the portion 21 includes an elastic body that can be elastically urged in a

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direction substantially perpendicular to a transmitting direction of drive power. Nothing in

Barry discloses or suggests that the segments are elastic bodies that can be elastically urged in a

direction perpendicular to a direction of drive power.

Second, it is noted that the Barry reference teaches a device in which the segments 11 of

the endoscope are permanently attached to each other by fitting a hinge pin 25 (projecting

portion) into a hinge aperture 24 (fitting hole). In contrast, according to the present invention,

the "second joint" having a "fitting hole" and the "first joint" having the "projecting portion" are

constructed such that they are not permanently fitted to each other.

It is submitted that neither Yamashita nor Barry, whether taken alone or in combination,

disclose or suggest "wherein the second joint portion is connected to the drive power generating

means and arranged with respect to the first joint portion in such a manner that the second joint

portion is initially advanced substantially linearly by the drive power of the drive power

generating means without the projecting portion being fitted into the fitting hole, and the

projecting portion is arranged such that the second joint portion is connected to the first joint

portion by advancing the second joint portion substantially linearly until the projecting portion is

fitted into the fitting hole while an urging force is applied to the first joint portion by the elastic

body" as recited in amended claim 18.

Claim 19

The rejection of independent claim 19 in view of Yamashita was discussed above. As

discussed above, Yamashita does not disclose or suggest the "a first joint portion provided on

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the drive power transmitting means and a second joint portion provided on the drive power

generating means are provided to be connectable and separable" and "a coupling between the

first joint portion and the second joint portion is executed after the bending action member and

the actuator are jointed together" as recited in claim 19.

As will be discussed below, Barry does not alleviate any of these deficiencies in

Yamashita.

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The Examiner relies on Barry to teach first and second joint portions as claimed. Barry

discloses a flexible endoscope having articulated vertebra 10. The articulated vertebra 10 consist

of identical joined-together segments 11. The segments 11 are joined together by coaxial hinge

pins 16.

The Examiner relies on Fig. 3 and col. 3, lines 7-55 of Barry to teach the claimed "first

joint" and "second joint". Fig. 3 is a cross-section of a connection portion between the segments

11. As shown in Fig. 3, the end 21 of an upper segment 11 includes a hinge aperture 24. An end

20 of a lower segment 11 includes a hinge pin 25 that is attached to a surface of the lower

segment 11 with adhesive (see col. 3, lines 28-35). Joinder of segments 11 is completed when

the hinge pin 25 fits into the hinge aperture 24.

The Examiner considers the portion 20 of the lower segment 11 having the hinge pin 25

to correspond to the claimed "first joint portion". The Examiner considers the portion 21 of the

upper segment 11 having the hinge aperture 24 to correspond to the claimed "second joint

portion".

However, it is respectfully submitted that neither Yamashita nor Barry, whether taken

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alone or in combination, disclose or suggest the "a first joint portion provided on the drive power

transmitting means and a second joint portion provided on the drive power generating means are

provided to be connectable and separable" and "a coupling between the first joint portion and the

second joint portion is executed after the bending action member and the actuator are jointed

together" as recited in claim 19.

Yamashita is silent regarding the specifics of the features that allow the grip to be

removable, and does not disclose a first joint portion provided on a drive power transmitting

means and a second joint portion provided on a drive power generating means that are

connectable and separable. Further, Yamashita does not disclose or suggest that the coupling

between the first and second joint portions occurs after the bending action member and the

actuator are joined together.

Barry does not alleviate any of the above-noted deficiencies of Yamashita.

Specifically, Barry discloses a flexible endoscope having multiple segments 11 that are

connected together. The Examiner considers the portion 20 of a lower segment 11 having the

hinge pin 25 to correspond to the claimed "first joint portion". The Examiner considers the

portion 21 of the upper segment 11 having the hinge aperture 24 to correspond to the claimed

"second joint portion".

However, first, Barry does not teach that the segments 11 are connectable and separable.

For example, Barry discloses that the pins 25 are inserted into the respective apertures 24 and

attached via adhesive or welding (see col. 3, lines 31-35). Thus, the segments are permanently

connected.

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Second, Barry does not disclose a first joint portion provided on a drive power

transmitting means and a second joint portion provided on a drive power generating means that are connectable and separable. Barry does not disclose or suggest the arrangement of the

segments 11 with respect to a drive power transmitting means and a drive power generating

means

Finally, Barry does not disclose or suggest that the coupling between the first and second

joint portions occurs after the bending action member and the actuator are joined together.

Barry is silent regarding when the coupling occurs.

Therefore, the combination of Yamashita and Barry does not disclose or suggest all

elements recited in independent claim 19.

A rejection under §103 requires that the combination of teachings applied against the

claims must disclose, or at least suggest, all claimed elements. The combination of Yamashita

et al. and Kuehn et al. does not disclose or suggest all elements recited in claims 10 and 11.

The combination of Yamashita and Barry does not disclose or suggest all claimed elements

recited in claims 17-20. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims

10-11 and 17-20 under §103 are respectfully requested.

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CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that all pending claims are in condition for

allowance. A prompt and favorable reconsideration of the rejection and an indication of

allowability of all pending claims are earnestly solicited.

If the Examiner believes that there are issues remaining to be resolved in this application,

the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated

below to arrange for an interview to expedite and complete prosecution of this case.

If this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate

extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect

to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

WESTERMAN, HATTORI, DANIELS & ADRIAN, LLP

WILLIAM M. SCHERTLER/

William M. Schertler Attorney for Applicants

Registration No. 35,348 Telephone: (202) 822-1100

Facsimile: (202) 822-1111

WMS/ar

Attachments: Replacement sheets for Figs. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7

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